



Obedience & Your USAR Dog ...It's Black & White

By Dian Quist Sulek

One of the basics of any dog training program, whether you have a pet dog or a search dog or both, begins with trust. You must have an understanding with your dog that you will not put him in danger. Your dog must trust you. This starts at home, at the Vet, the park, at dog class, etc. It is a long process that for the pet dog can take months, or maybe a couple years. For the search dog, it will take a lifetime.

Your search dog is a special dog, a dog that YOU will also have to trust. The only time you can trust your dog is when you know the dog trusts you and is willing to follow your instructions. How do we know we can send our dog into anything and trust that his performance will meet our expectations and the expectations of those in danger? How can we be so confident?

Your confidence builds when you have carefully planned your training program, EVERY step of the way. Your training program should be comprised of 75% planning and 25% working with your dog. You need to think and re-think — what if this happens? What if that happens? How will I respond? How will my dog respond? How will I change my dogs behavior? How will I reward my dog? The time to make these types of decisions is NOT when they are happening.

Dogs will work through a problem but only to the level you have trained them. When a dog gets confused, or stumped, he will rely on what he knows. Did you ever just stare at your dog? Don't say anything, just stare at him. Eventually your dog will show you almost everything he knows, hoping that one of his "tricks" is what you want. You must carefully plan the levels your dog will achieve, study your dog and constantly re-evaluate your training program.

Make sure when you are training your dog, he only sees black and white. It is either this way or it's not! Your dog will learn to trust you, and *then* you can trust your dog.



Announcement

Elaine Sawtell has informed NETF-1 that she has resigned her affiliation with the Missouri Search and Rescue Task Force for personal reasons. She will continue to participate as an NETF-1 Canine Program Manager. Elaine has advised that Monica Barger will coordinate joint training with Missouri Task Force and be the point of contact for NETF-1 team members in Lincoln. Kathy with the Missouri Task Force will be the point of contact in Missouri. Any questions regarding this training should be directed to Monica Barger.

Thank You!

I want to thank everyone that sent me articles for this month. Good job and keep them coming!!



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Bulletin*



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FEMA Type II Canine Evaluation

The Marion County Urban Search and Rescue Task Force (INTF-1) is offering a FEMA Type II (Basic) Canine Evaluation. The dates of this evaluation are November 21 & 22, 1998 in Indianapolis, Indiana. The test is limited to 12 dogs. All dog teams should have passed a pre-test given by their respective Task Forces to ensure readiness.

Why a Pretest?

By Elaine Sawtell

NETF-1 canine guidelines require successfully completing a pretest before a team receives task force endorsement to enter a FEMA Type II Search Canine Readiness Evaluation.

Foremost among the reasons for this requirement is **RESPECT FOR THE DOG**. Handlers who have previous training experience know a dog who is not performing reliably in its home field will more than likely have problems in unfamiliar surroundings. The dog may be an excellent candidate for disaster search but has not yet reached the level of consistent performance necessary to achieve certification. Mock tests are a good barometer of where the canine is in his development. Corrections can be made and training can occur. However, to put the dog under actual test conditions before he is ready can, and often does, result in a negative training experience.

A second consideration is requiring a pretest is **RESPECT FOR THE SYSTEM**. Testing opportunities have increased; but the number of teams that can be evaluated on a given day is still limited, and it is a disservice to the evaluation process to enter a team that is not ready. While not a part of the FEMA Search Canine Readiness Evaluation standard at this time, the trend to require pretests on the national level started in December 1995. This was due, in part, to the extremely low pass rate. The recent experience at our local test with 22 participating over a 2-day period and 2 passing is not an indication of a problem with the process; but, rather, demonstrates the need for a **VALID** pretest to reduce the incidences of teams testing prematurely.

What is a valid pretest? To establish a team's readiness for a Type II evaluation, the pretest must mirror as much as possible the requirements and ambience of a real test. It should be conducted by a rostered FEMA evaluator, who is familiar with the required skills necessary for certification. It should be set up to give the dog unfamiliar and new situations in line with test requirement. Particularly when conducted on home field, the team should pass without questionable performance. Of course, successful completion of a valid pretest is not a guarantee of passing the evaluation.

Ultimately, the pretest demonstrates on the part of the Task Force and the handler **RESPECT FOR THE VICTIM** and the awesome responsibility a handler assumes when he says his dog is ready to test and, by inference, capable of finding and alerting on a buried live victim in a disaster.

**Submission of Items
for the "Canine Bulletin"...**

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